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## BRAND—IBSEN'S BIGOT?

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*Portland, Oregon*

IN A fairly recent book on the modern drama, Eric Bentley calls Ibsen's Brand a fanatic, a "man of one principle," a bigot. "The good man of one principle," says Bentley, "that man of the formula who is with us today more than ever, Ibsen consigns to an avalanche, rejected, like the original Pharisees, even by the God of love."<sup>1</sup>

At first we tend to respond to Bentley's statements affirmatively, feeling that the characterization is just. On the surface, certainly, the description of Brand seems to confirm this impression. We have only to think of his principle of "all or nothing," his attitude toward his own family, and his harshness toward the villagers to turn our judgment against him. A preacher so unyielding, so unrelenting, must be a fanatic and hence well deserves condemnation.

When, however, the first reaction to the charge of bigotry has subsided, we are beset with doubts. Indeed, as we further contemplate this prime figure of a poetic drama, we are not satisfied that the evidence is so completely against him. We recall that Brand is by no means a simple dramatic figure readily catalogued as a type. Unlike the Pharisees, for example, his rigorousness is not centered on superficial matters of rites, ceremonies, and traditions; on the contrary, it is based on a profound conviction that a man's personal integrity may be his most precious possession. Surely Brand has some qualities that should excite our admiration.

To come to grips with this perplexing problem regarding

<sup>1</sup> *The Playwright as Thinker* (New York, 1946), p. 58.

Brand's character, we should proceed methodically to examine the evidence at hand. What do we mean by "bigot"? What were the motivating forces that impelled Brand to act as he did? And how did he act? What did Ibsen intend to do in *Brand*? If we can answer these questions disinterestedly, we should be able to make an evaluation of Brand on the basis of evidence rather than of emotional response.<sup>2</sup>

Let us begin by setting up definitions of "bigot." English and French dictionaries provide us with the following meanings.<sup>3</sup> First, "bigot" is a depreciatory word, a term of derogation comparable to a pejorative; in fine, it is a means of calling someone a name indicating disparagement rather than opprobrium.<sup>4</sup> Second, it has been used as a synonym for hypocrite. Third, it is associated with superstition. Fourth, it describes a person who clings blindly and unreasonably to religious or other opinions. Fifth, it indicates intolerance toward the views of others.

The dictionaries, however, do not quite satisfy our sense of meanings for the usage of the term "bigot." Seemingly anyone who adheres unswervingly to a set of opinions is in great danger of being called "blind and unreasonable," regardless of the character of the opinions. Thus the members of one religious persuasion often regard the members of another as pagans, heathens, and benighted, superstitious creatures. To one of no religious persuasion, all strict adherents of sects may appear blind and unreasonable. By transference, we can apply the same kind of reasoning to opinions of any character. In other words, the definitions in the dictionaries make it possible to apply the word "bigot" to anyone who clings steadfastly to any opinion or

<sup>2</sup> A writer like Peter J. Eikeland (*Ibsen Studies*, Northfield, Minn., 1934) responds with complete Christian bias; one like Anatol Lunacharsky (see the Introductory Note to *Henrik Ibsen*, New York, 1937, edited by Angel Flores) with a torquate Marxian analysis.

<sup>3</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1933); *Dictionnaire National* (Paris, 1874); *Dictionnaire Général de la Langue Française* (Paris, 1920); *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Française* (Paris, 1932).

<sup>4</sup> At the present writing, the controversy over federal aid to education has brought the term "bigot" to immediate public attention. It has now been used by a clergyman to label members of the laity, and in this usage it seems to connote opposition to a particular religious sect.



course of action: patriots, consistent voters of a straight ticket, academicians and artists of particular schools, and all others in kind. In truth, even a faithful monogamist may find himself listed as a marital bigot!

But, we protest, we do not call a man a bigot for devoting himself with patriotic unselfishness to his country. It is only when he attempts to compel everyone else to be a patriot in his particular way that we begin to see him in a different light. Again, mathematicians are often looked upon as queer and eccentric folk, but not one is called a bigot for obstinately abiding by a number system based on unity and multiplicity. It is only when a mathematician insists on making everything subject to numbers that we seriously question his procedures. So too in religion, we do not call a man a bigot because he clings to a particular faith, even if we frankly think of him as blind and unreasonable; we call him a bigot only when he forcibly attempts to impose his beliefs on others. Thus we call the Spanish Inquisition the product of religious bigots; likewise we state that bigots were responsible for the execution of so-called witches in Europe and America from the fifteenth century into the eighteenth. In these latter instances, intolerance was buttressed by the compelling means of torture and murder.

When we therefore talk of bigotry, we must keep in mind the characteristic of compulsion, compulsion by every means at one's disposal. Obviously a bigot is necessarily an authoritarian—others must conform absolutely to his program of thought and action or else suffer dire punishment. I take it that Eric Bentley had something like this in mind when he spoke of "that man of the formula who is with us today more than ever."

With these definitions before us, let us go through the text of *Brand*<sup>5</sup> first to determine the principles, or motivating ideas, and second to note Brand's actions. The motivating ideas, I believe, may be summarized as follows:

1. One should be a man; that is, one should have the physical and moral courage to take a stand and then maintain it.
2. To be a man, one must be fully himself, must be whole; hence personal integrity is of paramount importance.

<sup>5</sup> I have used the text as edited by Julius E. Olson (Chicago, 1908).

3. Since integrity or wholeness is not fractional, it demands all; thus emerges the principle of "all or nothing."

4. Compromise is the destroyer of integrity and thus must always be opposed.

5. Integrity demands consistency, and this means that principles must be translated into action.

6. In order that principles may be translated into action, one must have an indomitable will, a determination so strong that one will attempt even that which apparently cannot be done.

7. This indomitable will is never a matter of compliance to external forces; it must operate as an expression of free will on the part of the individual.

8. The will is manifested particularly when dilemmas occur, that is, at the various crossroads of life.

9. Those who put forth all their effort of will and yet fail will suffer no reproach, but those who do no more than that which is conveniently at hand will be condemned.

10. If an individual has a mission to fulfil, he must carry it out no matter what the cost may be.

11. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children even unto the third generation.

These motivating ideas could possibly be condensed or expanded. As they stand, however, I believe that they represent fairly the ideational forces in *Brand*. With the majority of them we can have no quarrel, for they are expressions of ideals commonly held by civilized peoples. We applaud courage and integrity; we like men who have so much determination that they will attempt what seems impossible; and we look upon freedom as the *sine-qua-non* element of modern life. Patently it is these principles that have awakened in us the feeling of admiration for Brand. On the other side, however, we observe the lack of compromise, the mission to fulfil, and the guilt complex. And these are the principles that seemed so to dominate the character of Brand as to make him a bigot. Before we proceed farther with the analysis, however, we should quickly review the drama, act by act, so that we have clearly before us Brand's actions.

Act I. Brand engages three sets of figures: the peasant and his son, the painter Einar and his fiancée Agnes, and the ab-

normal girl, Gerd. Brand tramps through the treacherous mountain snows with the object of helping the peasant reach the bedside of his dying daughter. The peasant, becoming more and more afraid of fog, snowslides, and rotten ice crusts, finally yields to his fears and gives up the quest. In the conversation Brand reveals that he is on God's business in this world; he also shows great physical courage—manliness. He spurns the peasant for the latter's unwillingness to go on, his cowardice, his regard for himself rather than for his daughter. On the other side of the mountain Brand meets the light-hearted artist Einar and the latter's fiancée, Agnes. This encounter provides necessary expository material for the drama. Einar is an old schoolmate of Brand's; thus there is opportunity for retrospection. We learn of Brand's childhood, of his sober cast of mind as a schoolboy, his present mission to heal the world, his scorn for his vacillating compatriots, and his great insistence on integrity. In the soliloquy that follows the dialogue with Einar and Agnes, Brand tells us that his native village lies in the valley below the mountain. The meeting with Gerd is largely a provision for the resolution of the drama. The phantom hawk—recognized only at the end of the drama as the spirit of compromise—is introduced; so too, the ice church, the tremendous avalanche that may be released by the slightest vibration. In this first act, it is important to observe that Brand stands in opposition to all the other figures introduced by Ibsen.

Act II. The antithesis between Brand and his fellow men is strengthened. The preacher arrives in his native village as food is being doled out to the citizens of this famine-ridden community. Asked for a monetary contribution, Brand gives nothing; instead, he castigates his fellow citizens for their sinfulness. Soon, however, he demonstrates his great physical courage by tempting death on the stormy fjord. In his capacity as preacher he offers to sail the fjord in order to go to the bed of a dying man, and he needs but one other person to help manage the boat. Because the trip seems suicidal, no one will accompany him, not even the wife of the dying man. At long last Agnes volunteers her services, and by this move she indicates that the apostle of courage has found a companion. The successful sailing

of the fjord proves that the seemingly impossible may be accomplished by those who have sufficient will and fortitude.

In this second act we also meet Brand's mother, an avaricious creature, totally lacking in human warmth, who wants to strike a bargain with her clergyman son. Brand, as son, is to have the family fortune, provided he cultivate it and pass it on to his son; in return, he is to attend his mother with the sacraments and thus assure her safe passage into the next world. Brand, insisting on integrity of action, refuses the conditions. Only if his mother gives up everything—is fully repentant—will he offer her the final consolation of religion.

Brand also comes to terms with his ambitions. We see him first as a young man who has set out to heal the world, and naturally he intends to go to the great and important fields of action. Through the vision of Agnes, however, he realizes that he should give up the romantic dream of healing the whole world and begin work in the most humble and unpromising of places, his native village. Moreover, Agnes also decides to follow the preacher, despite his sharp warning that she must give all or nothing, even to the sacrifice of her own life. Brand does not wait for an answer, because her decision must be free from any compulsion on his part. She freely determines to follow Brand even while her fiancé Einar is pleading with her, and her words are significant:

Ind i natten. Gennem døden,—  
Bagom dæmrer morgenrøden.

Act III. The third act opens three years after the close of the second. Brand and Agnes have married and are the parents of a baby boy, little Alf. The work in the parish has succeeded beyond Brand's most extravagant hopes, but the testing time is apparently now at hand. First, Brand is faced with his mother's request for the sacraments, although she has not repented or shown any tendency to surrender her miserly attachment to material things. Second, the Mayor advises the preacher either to leave the community or to accept battle. Third, Brand is caught in a dilemma between fulfilment of his duty to God and fulfilment of his duty to his child. The Mayor provides but little

testing for Brand, for the latter is determined to remain at his post come what may. When, however, he learns that his mother is approaching death, unyielding and unrepentant, Brand has to wrestle with himself. His wife, the physician, and messengers urge him to relent and go to his mother even though she has not yielded. But Brand will not come to terms with others—not even with his own mother—at the expense of his integrity; hence he refuses to attend the dying woman. On the other hand, when he learns that his own son may die if left in the gloomy mountain land, the preacher goes into a panic. He is ready to give up his mission, to leave the parish and flee with wife and child to save the latter's life. The taunts of the physician, the words of simple trust coming from a parishioner, and the wild talk of Gerd bring Brand to a different appraisal of the situation. He realizes that he has committed himself to such an extent that he has no alternative but to remain. If he is to be the man who maintains his integrity in the face of all odds, he must translate his words into deeds. And the act closes with Agnes despairingly concurring in the decision to remain at the post of duty:

Agnes (lifter barnet højt på armene).  
 Gud! det offer, du tør kræve,  
 tør jeg mod din himmel hæve!  
 Led mig gennem livets gys!

Act IV. Alf has been dead a short time, and Agnes struggles to throw off her consuming sorrow on a Christmas Eve. Brand is still battling with himself in an effort to understand the meaning of events. Nevertheless, he continues to translate principles into action. Agnes, with the help of her husband, at last succeeds in overcoming her sorrow. The arrival of a gypsy with her cold and hungry babe makes necessary a choice for Agnes, who is lovingly fondling the garments of her dead son. She finally gives up all to this woman, representing the least of human creatures, and is free. But it is obvious that this is done at the cost of her own life, for "den, som ser Jehova, dør!" Brand is overwhelmed with a sense of family guilt; in truth, he is convinced that the gross sin of his mother has cost the life of Alf. The preacher cannot comprehend why things are as they are, but he thinks that the community needs a larger church, particularly when Agnes makes

a statement in like vein. Brand decides to spend his mother's fortune in the building of a new and larger church for the community. Here he seems fully to dominate the Mayor, now a beaten official, but there is an element of foreboding in the latter's sudden enthusiasm for the preacher's project. The act closes with Brand in anguish over the inevitability of Agnes' death:

Brand (knuger hænderne mod brystet).  
Sjæl, vær trofast til det sidste!  
Sejrens sejr er alt at miste.  
Tabets alt din vinding skabte;—  
evigt ejes kun det tabte!

Act V. Agnes is now dead, the new church building has been erected, and the day of dedicatory ceremonies has arrived. All the public officials now seem to support Brand, and he is to be knighted by a grateful State. The preacher, however, is still wrestling with his thoughts, still searching to understand events and rightly to interpret his mission in life. At last, he awakens to the fact that what was needed was not this new edifice of inert materials but something far more significant, the community of all men. That was the larger church of which Agnes had spoken, but he had not then understood what she meant. Feeling compromised, Brand refuses to go through with the exercises. He locks the doors of the church, throws the keys into the river, and invites the gathered crowds to follow him in the creation of the great church, the community of all men. The multitude, responding emotionally but not quite understanding what is meant, follows Brand but a short way. Then it weakens, whimpers, and wishes to go back to the old community. The Mayor, who has overtaken the preacher and his followers, tells a lie about a tremendous shoal of fish to be caught in the fjord. Brand is then quickly forsaken and even driven away by stoning. The multitude returns to the village, presumably to its former ways, while Brand climbs up the rugged paths of the mountain. For the last time he is tempted, this time by visions of his beloved wife and child, but when he understands that the spirit of compromise is threatening his personal integrity, he stands firm in his refusal to yield. The mad girl, Gerd, joins him and walks with him to the

ice church. There the girl fires a rifle, and thus she inadvertently sets up vibrations that cause the avalanche to be released. The act and the drama come to the following close:

Brand (krymper sig under den styrtende skred og siger opad):

Svar mig, Gud, i dødens slug;—

gælder ej et frelsens fnug

mandeviljens *quantum satis*—?

(Skreden begraver ham; hele dalen fyldes.)

En røst (råber gennem tordenbragene):

Han er *deus caritatis*!

The statement of the principles motivating Brand and the review of actions in the drama should help us to comprehend that there is no possibility of dismissing Brand as a typical figure, in this case a bigot. Too many of his principles are those which receive wide approval from civilized peoples, and the harshest of his actions must be examined carefully before judgment is made. Moreover, we should also try to determine what Ibsen thought he was doing in this play.

Indeed, what was Ibsen's object in writing *Brand*? Scandinavian critics seem to be of the opinion that Ibsen was setting up Brand as a model for his fellow citizens, a figure of courage and determination in contradistinction to the shilly-shallying Northmen. One cannot read a life of Ibsen without realizing that he was greatly upset by the refusal of Norway and Sweden to help Denmark in the latter's war with Prussia. To the poet, the actions of his compatriots provided ample evidence of an all-pervading weakness—cowardice, irresolution, untruthfulness, betrayal, selfishness, improvidence. They would and could never accomplish anything because they were victims of their own defeatism; never would they attempt anything unless the success of the venture was guaranteed at the outset. Ibsen, let us remember, was in a kind of voluntary exile in Rome, a rather unsuccessful poet and dramatist nursing some bitter feelings about the homeland. All the circumstances of the writing of *Brand* make it plausible that Ibsen was employing the drama as a positive weapon against his compatriots, not as a means of satirizing the man of one principle. Indeed, the question must be raised: If in *Brand* Ibsen was satirizing the man of one principle, against



whom was the shaft directed? Since the dramatist thought of his fellow Northmen as people demonstrably adhering to no principle, it would seem without point, or a strange kind of circumforaneity, to ridicule people who had principles.

We are still more disturbed when we read in Halvdan Koht's *Life of Ibsen* these statements: "Brand became the consistent representative of Ibsen's own indignation and will. 'Brand is myself in my best moments,' he once wrote later. It was thus that he wished he might have been. Only in this way could he speak to the conscience of his people."<sup>6</sup> It seems scarcely plausible that the unsuccessful young Norwegian writer was pillorying the bigot in himself and calling upon all the Scandinavians to aid him in this task. Surely no man would be inclined to have his better self rejected by the God of love. Indeed, if we accept the statement that Brand is Ibsen in the latter's best moments, we must reject the idea that Ibsen intended to portray a bigot.

To approach the subject from another point of view, we also have to ask why Ibsen chose to create a parallel between Brand and Christ. Critics have written of Brand as one whose God was the merciless, angry Jehovah of the Old Testament; yet, from the beginning of the drama (when we find Brand proclaiming his mission from the mountain) to the end (when he cries out to God in the agony of his death) we are reminded of Christ. It is true that Brand rejects the comparison when it is made by the mad girl, Gerd; but this is still in harmony with the figure of Jesus in the Gospels. In *Matthew*, Jesus rejects identity with God: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." Surely Ibsen was not portraying Brand as a pseudo-Christ, discrediting him because he was too chary in maintaining his personal integrity!

Consider, further, the last portrait of Einar. The painter, according to his own story, has wallowed in evil but now, because

<sup>6</sup> Vol. I (New York, 1931), p. 279. See also Emil Reich, *Henrik Ibsens Dramen* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 98-99: "Dem modernen Faust, Pfarrer Brand, gab Ibsen viel von seiner eigenen Persönlichkeit. 'Brand bin ich selbst in meinen besten Augenblicken' . . ." Likewise see George Meir, *Dood en Doodssymboliek in Ibsens Werken* (Antwerp, 1938), p. 70: "'Brand, dat ben ik zelf in mijn beste oogenblikken.' "



of his acceptance of a religious formula, he is purer than the lily. Einar condemns Agnes, says she is damned, because she did not have the right formula when she died. Moreover, Einar himself has a mission to fulfil and is on his way to convert the heathen in Africa. A superficial reading might make us think that this portrayal of Einar is a mirror for Brand, but a more careful reading permits no such interpretation. There is, on the contrary, a sharp contrast between the two. Brand is a man struggling with his conscience from the moment the prime tests begin, but for Einar the struggle is over the minute one accepts the given formula.

We should not insist that there are no signs of bigotry. In fact, some of the potentials of the bigot are clearly manifested in Brand. He has a conviction that God has sent him on a mission to heal the whole world, a mission so compelling that he must fulfil it no matter what happens to those about him or to himself. Further, he has a superstitious regard for guilt by biological association, for he feels that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Moreover, his principle that one must yield "all or nothing," that there must be no compromise, seems finally to place him inextricably in the coils of bigotry.<sup>7</sup> The test, of course, comes in his actions. Because of his unwillingness to compromise, he spurns the peasant; he refuses to help the starving villagers; he lets his old mother die unshriven; he stubbornly remains in his parish though it costs the life first of Alf and then of Agnes; he continues at odds with the duly constituted public authorities, and he finally stirs up something little short of rebellion.

Our interpretation of Brand's actions must hinge on an understanding of compromise in relation to personal integrity. We are taught that all reasonable people make compromises—in-

<sup>7</sup> One could make an interesting psychological study of Brand's unhappy childhood, the guilt complex, and the certainty of his mission. See, for example, Julian Huxley's statement, "The mechanism of repression is an all-or-none mechanism: and the conscious accompaniment of such a mechanism is a subjective sense of certitude." This sentence is taken from the essay "Religion as an Objective Problem" (p. 131), which is found in *Man in the Modern World* (New York, 1948).

deed, that compromise is the only way to come to terms with life. Unfortunately, however, we are not taught that compromises do not come in a single package. Were we so taught, we would realize that there are many matters involving differences of opinion that may be compromised without sacrifice of personal integrity, but we would also come to the hard understanding that some settlements also compromise character. A drama like *Brand* thus causes so much difficulty in interpretation because it forces on us a question which we usually do not want to consider with the intellectual honesty that it requires. Our own crimes against conscience are suppressed or routed through rationalization in order that they may not trouble us. Be they small or great, our own falsehoods, betrayals, dishonesty, hypocrisy, and the like—compromises made in order that we may thrive in the community of men—are usually hidden in the most secret unholy-of-unholies.

But if it is painful to look at ourselves individually, we may turn to the records of *homo sapiens*. History is replete with evidences of compromise at the expense of personal integrity; for those who struggled to maintain honesty, the records point to martyrdom or villification. In truth, liberty of conscience, the right to proceed honestly in one's actions, is a contemporary problem. Authoritarianism, whether it be of a dominating clique or of folkways and *mores*, places the highest value on compliance; liberty of conscience thus becomes synonymous with rebellion.

Inadvertently or otherwise, Ibsen has posed a profound problem in *Brand*. How can one maintain his personal integrity and still be a member of society? Or, in balder terms, how can one be honest and yet survive, let alone thrive? Ibsen placed Brand in dilemmas from which he could emerge only as a fraud or else as a harsh, uncompromising figure; and, in the end, Ibsen delivered him to martyrdom. That this death constituted a rejection of Brand is simply not in harmony with the text or, indeed, in harmony with a God of love. One can with better reason provide as an explanation the report of one of our contemporaries who himself struggled much with the problem of maintaining personal integrity: "Those who honor truth and whose integrity is

uncompromising are in no way excused from going on. . . . Because the way is strait the believer is not excused from going down it. The nation may be morally lost; the individual who opposes the obscurantism in which it is being lost, is nevertheless saved."<sup>8</sup>

Those who pore over the pages of *Brand* will arrive at no simple interpretation for the character of the preacher. Brand is, in a sense, the personification of Ibsen's conscience and thus also a symbol of the conscience of every man. That Brand has within him the potentials of bigotry is of minor significance when we bear in mind his insistence on the free choice of the individual and thus his rejection of authoritarianism. What is important is this: As far as Brand could determine, with all the probing of his own being, a man cannot both preserve his honesty and thrive among his fellow men. Either he goes the lonely way of rectitude, or else he surrenders his personal integrity in coming to terms with men. In thus exploiting the conflict between conscience and the actualities of living, Ibsen bared the tragic confusion of human existence.

<sup>8</sup> R. G. Tugwell, *The Stricken Land* (Garden City, N. Y., 1946), p. 442.

## REVIEWS

Lundberg, Oskar: *Runristningen från Eggjum och forntro om havel. With a Summary in English: The Runic Inscription of Eggjum and Old Traditions of the Sea* (*Arctos Svecica. Studia Selecta Res Vetustas Illustrantia*. 3. Edidit Oskar Lundberg). Uppsala, 1949. Price, 3 crowns. Pp. 48. Quarto.

Oskar Lundberg, Associate Librarian Emeritus of Uppsala University, has here undertaken the problem of interpreting the early runic inscription of Eggjum, Norway. In so doing, he sympathetically reviews the opinions of previous scholars, particularly Magnus Olsen, Lis Jacobsen, Annie Heiermeier, and Arthur Nordén. Especially acknowledging results achieved by the first two of the above-mentioned runologists in establishing a readable text despite the crumbling stone and illegible runes, Dr. Lundberg nevertheless is dissatisfied with the general and specific interpretations hitherto placed on the inscription. He considers his own contribution to the subject to be in the nature of a new view of the whole problem ("helhetssyn").

Considerations of cost seem unfortunately to have prevented the inclusion of a photographic plate, a drawing of the stone and its inscription, or even a reduced facsimile of the runic characters alone. The reader is helped, however, by Lundberg's transcription and by a pen drawing indicating the relative size and spacing of the runes and their placing relative to the figure of a horse, also included. The horse, according to Lundberg, is a symbol of the sea and hence furnishes the key to the inscription.

The author's runic text reads as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*ni s solu sot  
uk ni sakse stain skorin  
ni saidmar nakda  
ni snarpir ni willtir manr lagi pi  
hin warb naseu mar  
made þaim kaiba i bormopa huni*

<sup>1</sup> In accord with Lundberg's procedure in his main text, I have put the transcription of the runic words in ordinary italics, without distinction between *R* and *r* or between *A* and *a*, and without the evidence of several minor reconstructions. Each of the four divisions of the transliterated text corresponds to a line of runes in the inscription.

*huvar ok kam harsi a*  
*hi a lat gotna*  
*fiskr or flaina uim suemade*  
*fokl i frakna il galandi*  
  
*sa tu misurki?*

The inscription on the cenotaph at Eggjum has been variously interpreted as a description of a burial rite and as a formula to lay the ghost of the deceased. The essence of Lundberg's own view is that the Eggjum runes are the product of an introspective artist and father mourning the drowning of the bold and vigorous Stæinn, his son. The word *slain* of the inscription is thus to be taken as a personal name; the inscription itself, according to the author, is a "klagolåt" or song of lamentation over a warrior who, unlike the son of Egill Skallagrímsson, is not expected to reach Valhalla, but rather languishes in the chilly realm of Ægir and Ran. The one ultimately responsible for this "evil deed" is the god Odin, whom our unknown carver of runes, again unlike the skald Egill, hesitates to denounce openly. In the inscription, furthermore, is seen a reference to "sejd" or magic in the presumed setting of Valhalla. Nevertheless, the author objects to any suggested occult purpose in the Eggjum runes as well as to any attempts to find name magic or cult descriptions.

The word *naseu* Lundberg interprets as meaning "liksjö" or "corpse-wave": this is to be taken literally, he adds, and not as a kenning for blood.<sup>3</sup> *kaiba*, Swedish *kejpar*, denotes the

<sup>2</sup> Lundberg's Swedish translation reads as follows:

1. *icke är det där av sol ansatt och icke med svärd skuren (är) Sten; icke (är där) den nakne sejd mannen; icke (äro där) på så vis snärjde och villade män.*
2. *Denne man vräkte (fram) liksjön, förslet därmet kejparna i det "borr-trölla" skeppet.*
3. *Vem kom här hit till människors land, simmande som en fisk i pilarnas skur, sjungande som en fågel i spjutens stormby.*
4. *Denne dog genom illdåd.*

The English summary is furnished with an English translation of the above. "Corpse wave," rather than "ghost wave," is the proper translation of "liksjön" in stanza 2. In other respects, the Swedish and English renderings are substantially identical.

<sup>3</sup> He equates the word *\*násjör*, not evidenced in ancient sources, with Modern Icelandic *násjör* "Ligbølge." The evidence is striking.

oarlocks of a ship, to which vessel, rather than to a sled as stated by MO, reference is made in the phrase *bormoþa huni*, "det borrhtrötta skeppet." Lundberg also finds it little likely that the Eggjum runes describe a warrior's burial (or commemorative) ceremonies, as assumed by other commentators. He devotes some attention to the etymologies of critical words and rather more attention to popular Scandinavian tradition concerning the sea. The streamlined carving of the horse, with only the upper part of the animal's body showing, he ingeniously equates with the ocean billow. The horse, he says, must be thought of as swimming, and the missing lower portion of the quadruped is thus concealed by the water. Despite this, the author rejects LJ's suggested rendering of *lat gotna* by "land of horses," though that translation, it seems, ought not to be regarded as less appropriate because of the rune-master's horse. In conclusion, Lundberg agrees with those who would attribute the inscription to the seventh century.

It would be presumption on the part of this reviewer to attempt a solution of the Eggjum problem.<sup>4</sup> Easier, far easier, is the armchair task of mustering the published views of those who have attempted a solution. And for the reviewer, as for most others, the stone and its inscription will continue to retain much that is uncertain. Lundberg's views are clearly and unequivocally expressed. He is assuredly right in urging that not by piecemeal, but only as a consistent whole, can the circumstances of the stone and the runes be expected to make sense. A strict *sequitur* of this reasoning, however, is that whatever invalidates or renders improbable a portion of the *raisonnement* similarly disqualifies or impairs the whole. Subjectivity cannot easily be avoided where scarcely a single point is certain upon which to base a consistent interpretation in keeping with Lundberg's demand. He has indeed touched upon manifestly unproven assertions made in previous writings. I refer, for example, to MO's arguments in favor of a sled, instead of a boat, for the phrase *bormoþa huni*; to LJ's confident cult description and insistence on name riddles; to AN's fish and bird magic and his

<sup>4</sup> I have never examined the Eggjum stone, now preserved in the Bergen Museum.

"ghost trap." One feels that some of Lundberg's assertions rest on equally uncertain ground. His reading, in line 4 of the inscription, of *lagi þi* I am loath to accept. The translation "på detta sätt" seems out of keeping with the otherwise terse and cryptic phraseology of a runic piece, and one, furthermore, in which each of the other logical "sentences" contains some kind of verb. And even though *sejd*, as practised by Odin, may be appropriate to discussions of Valhalla, there is hardly any special warrant for considering this abode of gods and heroes as the specific setting for an allusion to wizardry. *þa* for *þi* seems more likely by the laws of chance. This brings within sight, at least, a natural translation. With LJ and others, the reviewer can see in *lagi* a verb rather than a noun, the whole phrase possibly meaning that warlocks and men ensnared in sorcery should not lay (bare) the stone. Such a construction harmonizes well enough with MO's original interpretation of *stain* as a stone, i.e., the rune stone, which was carved, but not with iron, in a place untouched by the sun. How, where, why cannot be said, save conjecturally. The reviewer does not affect to know whether the verb *skera* (*skorin*) is the most natural expression to expect in support of a presumed reference to a man's being cut down in battle. That the alleged subject of the Eggjum inscription should be named Stæinn is certainly a coincidence, if not too great a one. One suspects that the relationship between sun and sword in the runic phrases must be somewhat more integral than the author's suggested translation would allow us to believe.<sup>5</sup>

The phrase *hin . . . mar*, "this man," Lundberg takes to be a reference not to the rune-master but to Odin on high, here seen through the veil of a taboo reference. The idea is tempting, and Lundberg's suggested identification of *naseu* with a Modern Icelandic word and hence with popular lore concerning

<sup>5</sup> Whether by inadvertency or not, the author has contrived to discredit his own interpretation through the translation of *sot* by "ansatt" (and, consistently, by English "beset"). Likely enough *sot* "sökt" means exactly that, in a hostile sense. But Lundberg's interpretation of *stain* as the name of a drowned warrior, condemned to dwell in watery depths unvisited by the friendly light of day, calls for a very different interpretation. The translation of *sot* by "nätt" "reached, visited" seems more in keeping with the author's intention.

drownings at sea is the strongest point in the work. That so typically terrestrial an animal as the horse should be presumed to symbolize the sea, is far less clear. More evidence would be welcome.

ERIK WAHLGREN  
*University of California*  
*Los Angeles*

Tallqvist, Knut. *Månen i myt och dikt, folktro och kult.* Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, Stockholm, 1948. Price, 13 crowns.

Tallqvist's treatment of the moon in myth, legend, and poetry, is designed for a popular appeal and has to be judged accordingly. So far as this reviewer can see, it contains no new material and is little more than a bringing together of ideas about the moon from peoples as widely scattered as the ancient Egyptians, the modern Europeans, and the present-day preliterate peoples of Africa and the Pacific Islands. It differs to some extent from such works as Fraser's *Golden Bough* in that there does not seem to be even a tacit assumption that these similar ideas are genetically connected; in fact, the work is little more than a neat classification of the ideas of all times and places concerning a single phenomenon of nature—the moon, its phases, its markings, its eclipses, and the like. Fortunately the author has avoided fantastic interpretations of his material such as are indulged in by those who interpret mythology and folktales as direct results of man's contemplation of the moon. To be sure, he shows his debt to writers of that school, such as Ehrenreich and Roheim, but he does not go so far as to advocate their method of study.

Books of the type we are here reviewing are frequently written by amateurs, so that even the facts presented are inaccurate. Such a charge cannot be laid to Professor Tallqvist's book. What he does seems to be accurate and carefully brought together.

STITH THOMPSON  
*Indiana University*



*The Andersen-Scudder Letters. Hans Christian Andersen's Correspondence with Horace Elisha Scudder.* Edited by Jean Hersholt and Waldemar Westergaard. Introduction by Jean Hersholt and an Essay by Helge Topsøe-Jensen. Notes and Translations by Waldemar Westergaard. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949. Pp. xxxiv+181. Price, \$7.50.

The Andersen-Scudder correspondence is an excellent introduction to the author of the *Eventyr*, although not to the *Eventyr* themselves. The letters by Andersen represent him *pars pro toto* in the years 1868 to his death in 1875. The correspondence does honor to Horace Scudder and shows him to have been a conscientious editor and upright man although not a brilliant personality.

With the exception of Mr. Hersholt's introduction, the present volume is substantially the same as the more scholarly edition of the correspondence which appeared last year in Denmark (*H. C. Andersen og Horace E. Scudder: En Brevveksling. Udgivet af Jean Hersholt Med Noter af Waldemar Westergaard og en Efterskrift af H. Topsøe-Jensen.* København, Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1948). The Danish edition prints Andersen's letters in the language in which they were written. Curiously enough, there is in the present edition no mention of its Danish counterpart. Mr. Hersholt's Danish introduction is more illuminating than the introduction in the American edition. Dr. Topsøe-Jensen's essay (the "Efterskrift" of the Danish edition) is the lucid work of an Andersen scholar.

In reading the correspondence, one makes interesting discoveries: some 10 of the *Eventyr* were originally published in English, in the United States; for his contributions to American periodicals and for the sales of his books published by Hurd and Houghton & Co. Andersen received in all about \$2200. This sum was not large and the undertaking of publishing Andersen's books was, by admission of the publishers, not a financial success. The remuneration was, nevertheless, not a pittance in the days before an international copyright. A key to Andersen's own literary tastes is found in his letter of December 20, 1870, in which he, replying to a request from Scudder, recommends

works of contemporary literature—to wit, Blicher's *Noveller*, the works of Goldschmidt, and those of the Norwegian author Andreas Munch.

There are some minor flaws in the editing. The lack of uniformity in giving titles is irritating. On page 92 the title of one periodical is given in Danish, of another in English, of a third in Danish with the English translation in brackets. On page 114 a title in English translation is followed by the Danish title in parentheses, as Andersen quoted it—incompletely. I would make a general plea for the use of the original titles of periodicals and books in the text and the following of some uniformity in translating or explaining them. There is a considerable number of minor orthographical differences between the English and Danish editions, chiefly in dates and addresses. Why? In the notes a Miss Raasløff is named as the translator into English of Andersen's first three letters, but in his second letter Andersen remarks that he cannot communicate with her because she is abroad. I have never seen any but the Latin plural of "honorarium" before (page xx). Finally, one might well grumble that, although the edition is a handsome one, it is priced unreasonably high at \$7.50.

It would be valuable to know how many letters by H. C. Andersen are preserved in the United States and what other American correspondents he may have had. Two letters from Andersen to Longfellow are preserved in the Longfellow House in Cambridge. Both are letters of introduction, the one written in Danish for Moses Melchior in March 1868 and the other in English for Robert Watt, Danish journalist, in July 1871. Watt, the Melchior family, and Longfellow all are mentioned in the correspondence with Scudder.

P. M. MITCHELL  
*Copenhagen, Denmark*

Ahlström, Gunnar. *Del moderna genombrottet i Nordens litteratur.*

Kooperativa Förbundets Bokförlag, Stockholm, 1947. Pp. 511. Notes. References. Index. Price, 14:50 crowns.

Docent Ahlström's work is divided into five sections: (1) *Diktarna och tiden*, (2) *Livstankarna*, (3) *Samhällsfrågorna*, (4)

*Litteraturen*, and (5) *Sammanbrottet*. He considers the whole problem of the revolt of four leading Scandinavian writers, Ibsen, Bjørnson, Brandes, and Strindberg, as well as hosts of others, major and minor, especially J. P. Jacobsen, Kielland, and Drachman, of the middle of the last half of the nineteenth century, against the traditionalism and the materialism of the age. The author's investigation sheds interesting light upon this important phenomenon in Scandinavian intellectual history, and I shall therefore give in some detail his analysis in Section I, *Diktarna och tiden*, as an illustration of his method.

He demonstrates that the writers in question did have, by and large, a particular, common view of their time: that the speculative, scheming, unscrupulous methods of the "money-grubbers" during the period of technological and economic development and expansion were responsible for the materialistic spirit of the age. He then presents the background of the expanding economy of Scandinavia and shows that such organizational "geniuses" as Wallenberg in Sweden and Tietgen in Denmark, as well as thousands of practical men who worked with them, were essential to the economic and industrial development of their respective countries. He states pointedly:

Men allt detta var en värld, som måste undvara den samtida litteraturens förståelse och bifall. På affärskontor, bankar och bolagsstämmor, i laboratorier och vid experimentbord, bland köpenskapens, teknikens och industriens föregångsmän utspelades under dessa decennier en mängd dramer som aldrig fick någon Ibsen till skildrare och lika många romaner som Strindberg underlät att skriva. . . . Huvudpersonerna i denna oskrivna verklighetsdikt hade också mycket få karaktärsegenskaper och åsikter gemensamma med dem som besjälade diktarnas irriterbara släkte. (Pp. 59-60).

Ahlström then analyzes in some detail the psychology of the ruling classes, and quotes Bernick (*Pillars of Society*) to illustrate his point: *Det er fra mig fremskridtene må komme, ellers kommer de aldrig* (p. 87). In a very real sense Bernick was right, because the development he participated in was directly responsible for a rise in the standards of living, it contributed to a climate in which more liberal political activity was possible, and in effect it was essential to the present progressive social order in Scandinavia. The writers took pains to point out that a hateful mate-

rialism was a concomitant of this development, a view that the leaders of finance and industry refused to recognize as valid. They believed in their mission as organizers and developers of industry and finance, and their defense of their view of life was sincere. The writers consistently challenged this view, although Ahlström emphasizes the fact that Ibsen and particularly Strindberg realized that there were two sides to the question; they understood the period, but were critical of it. We observe thus the anomaly of the leading writers attacking a materialism which was an inevitable adjunct of a development that was ultimately essential.

Ahlström concludes the first section of his work with a consideration of the impact of the literature of revolt, beginning with *Brand* and *Hovedströmning* and coming down to about the middle 1880's, upon materialism.

In the succeeding sections, against the elaborately reconstructed fabric of the period, the author discusses the relationship of the writers to other social problems and phenomena. Principal among these are the "emancipation from religion movement," and the substitution of the idea of the "power of good and the duty of the individual to take his destiny in his own hands." We find the struggle not to have been unequal, for the anti-liberal, reactionary State Church had gifted exponents of its position, powerful organization behind it, and unlimited financial backing. Ahlström shows that the writers had sympathy with, but limited understanding of, the growing problem of the laboring classes. He treats of their initial enthusiasm for women's emancipation, their consistent attack upon a stagnant educational system, and so on. He brings his analysis to a close by depicting the withdrawal of each writer from participation in the revolt to a personal, individual, often mystical philosophy. He agrees with Garborg that the revolt ended in disillusionment when the writers discovered that they were not leading a conquering army, but were marching alone, and that a logical extension of the philosophy of revolt could only end in the complete bankruptcy represented by certain writers in the 1890's.

Ahlström impressively documents his views with quotations

from the writers' own works and from contemporary sources. But since he deals with dozens of writers against the background of almost half a century of profound social change, he is bound to give interpretations of individual writers and their specific works and to point to foreign influences upon Scandinavian thought, and so forth, to which almost any reader might take exception. I feel, for example, that his treatment of the labor movement is not so carefully done as other parts of his discussion, that it is a serious shortcoming to disregard the pre-Brandesian "revolt" in Denmark (e.g., St. St. Blicher), that Part IV is somewhat repetitious, and that while he undoubtedly is correct in assuming that the anti-religious impulse came from Germany, his explanation of why it could not have come from England is unacceptable. On the other hand, I agree with, and others may take exception to, Ahlström's position on the Ibsen-Strindberg relationship, in which Ibsen remains throughout fairly independent of Strindberg in his development; and I also agree with his excellent study of *Niels Lyhne* as the expression of a vital, positive philosophy, not as a harbinger of decadence. Ahlström's book is a meaty treatise.

SVERRE ARESTAD

*University of Washington*

Lamm, Martin. *Det moderna dramat*. Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm, 1948. Pp. 363. Price, 18.50 crowns.

A glance at the table of contents in Lamm's book may give one the impression that only four sections—"Det norska dramat," "Björnsterne Björnson," "Henrik Ibsen," and "August Strindberg,"—have anything to do with modern Scandinavian drama, but further examination soon dispels that impression. While only four chapters are devoted exclusively to the three great Scandinavians who have been influential in the development of the modern drama, there is hardly a chapter which in some way or other is not pertinent to Scandinavian drama.

As Professor Lamm explains in his Foreword, *Det moderna dramat* is not a conventional history:

Med titeln *Det moderna dramat* har jag icke åsyftat att ge en sammanfattande översikt av all europeisk och amerikansk dramatik till skrivande stund. Det

skulle lätt bli en resonerande bibliografi, där läsaren tappade bort sig bland en mångfald namn och pjästitlar . . . . Min avsikt har varit att skildra det moderna dramats framväxt under sekel, som ligger mellan Scribes framträdande och nutiden, genom en rad dramatiker porträtt. Urvalet har bestämts av mitt subjektiva omdöme om de medtagnas betydelse för världsdramatiken. (P. 5).

Beginning with a brief introduction in which he considers the debt of modern drama to the neo-classic, the sentimental and the romantic drama of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Lamm proceeds to a more detailed examination of Scribe, Hebbel, Alexandre Dumas fils, Emile Augier, Sardou, and Labiche and their contributions to a treatment of the triumph of naturalism in France, to the contributions of the three Scandinavians, and, finally, to the other major playwrights since the 1870's.

For a reader primarily interested in Scandinavian drama, Lamm's fairly long chapters on Norwegian drama, Björnson, and Ibsen and—since it was written primarily for Swedish readers—the relatively brief chapter on Strindberg will be found useful. Lamm's judgment of the three playwrights and of their achievements and his many enlightening comments on their relationship with one another, their debts to predecessors and contemporaries, and their influence on the drama and the theater of their own and later times are excellent. Particularly interesting is his emphasis on the close literary relationship between Björnson and Ibsen; in this book, Björnson receives a treatment far more just than most students during the past four decades or so have been willing to grant him.

Professor Lamm has kept his book from becoming a mere "resonerande bibliografi." It is a far more important account and analysis of the development of modern drama than a necessarily brief review can indicate.

WALTER JOHNSON  
*University of Washington*

Elmquist, Carl Johan. *Strindbergs Kammerspil*. Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949. Pp. 104. Price, 7.75 crowns (Paper bound).

Among the many volumes of Strindberg's *Samlade Skrifter* we find one that bears the title *Kammarspel*. It contains five

short dramas, each of which is called an "opus." In other words this is the volume which represents Strindberg's effort to create in drama something comparable to chamber music. The result of that effort is set forth in Elmquist's little book, *Strindbergs Kammerspil*.

In this brief study Elmquist has given us detailed discussions of each one of the chamber plays: *Oväder*, *Brända tomten*, *Spöksonaten*, *Pelikanen*, and *Svarta handsken*. Moreover, in his opening and closing sections, he has written about "Strindberg og Teatret," "Intima Teatern," and the letters to the Intimate Theater.

The five chamber plays, says Elmquist, have a common motif, the unmasking of the middle-class Stockholm citizen (p. 7). We are reminded immediately of Émile Zola's *Pot Bouille*, in which the reader is permitted to observe the all-too-manifest shortcomings of bourgeois families. But Strindberg was quite unlike Zola in one important respect: Instead of life viewed through an individual temperament, the chamber plays were the product of free imagination arising from observations and experiences. That is to say, Strindberg felt himself under no compunctions to reproduce faithfully his observations and experiences; he let fancy take its course. Zola, on the other hand, while admitting temperament as a *sine-qua-non* element in naturalistic writing, insisted on the fundamental importance of factual data. We may thus be startled when on occasions the chamber plays seem to become almost identical with naturalistic dramas, but we shall find, as Elmquist tells us, that Strindberg has again created literature largely subjective in character (p. 8).

The formula for this new kind of drama is found in a letter which Strindberg addressed to his friend Adolf Paul: "Skrifver du nytt, så låt höra af Dig, men sök det intima i formen, litet motiv, utförligt behandlat, få personer, stora synpunkter, fri fantasi, men bygg på observation, upplevelse, väl studerat, enkelt men icke för enkelt, ingen stor apparat, inga öfverflödiga bipersoner. . . ." (P. 32; see also p. 100). The first chamber play, *Oväder*, is the one that Elmquist thinks best answers Strindberg's description. While the play derives its basic material from Strindberg's third marriage, it is certainly a product of the free imagination. And in all other respects it well fulfils the



requirements for a chamber play. In his closing comment, Elmquist says, "Det er virkelig et stykke scenisk kammermusik" (p. 45). This is admittedly figurative language, but it is more restrained than Paul Landau's pronouncement: "Musikalisch ist der ganze Aufbau von Stücken, wie *Das Gewitter*, wo dieselben Motive wiederkehren, dieselben Themen stets von neuem angeschlagen werden." (*Die deutsche Bühne*, May 24, 1920). We must, of course, not charge the writers with these figures of speech; they are intended only to help readers comprehend what Strindberg meant by chamber drama.

*Oväder* appeals to Elmquist as the opus which best fits the formula Strindberg provided, but the most complex and baffling is *Spöksonaten*. It is also the greatest of the chamber plays (p. 57). Moreover, Elmquist finds it an additional step along "the murky road of pessimism" that Strindberg was following. In his expounding of the play, Elmquist cites among others the following passage from *En blå bok*, Vol. I: "Vi leva ju icke i verkligheten utan i våra föreställningar om verkligheten" (p. 59). Without becoming involved in the metaphysics of this utterance, we may venture the opinion that Strindberg assuredly lived in his own representations of reality to such an extent that at times he had difficulty in distinguishing between his creative efforts and his actual life. The dramatis personae in *Spöksonaten* also experience the same difficulties, for they are neither wholly creatures of the dream world nor wholly of actuality.

The fourth chamber play, *Pelikanen*, takes up the same problem that has appeared in *Spöksonaten*. As Elmquist puts it: "Om man skal sige sandheden, den brutale, skånselsløse sandhed, eller om man bør tillsløre den og tie" (p. 80). Strindberg said that he would like to write beautiful and pleasant works, but found himself neither allowed nor able to do so. He says he takes it "som en fasans plikt at vara sann, och livet är obeskrivligt fult" (p. 59).

Most of all, in these short dramas, Strindberg reveals a great deal about himself, particularly his personality during the last decade of his life. Many small matters troubled him greatly. Indeed, a horror could be spun out of the most insignificant occurrence, and Strindberg was able to communicate that horror



even to the audience. It reduces to triviality only when one reads the text dispassionately.

Those who have found Strindberg's chamber plays too puzzling for enjoyment will do well to read Elmquist's book. This study may not offer any final judgments, but it will provide some clarity where there has previously been much confusion. Certainly one will find, as always, Strindberg recreating himself and his experiences in literary form; and this understanding will bring about a better appreciation of the chamber plays.

CARL E. W. L. DAHLSTROM

*University of California at Berkeley*

Sprigge, Elizabeth. *The Strange Life of August Strindberg*. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1949. Pp. ix+246. Price, \$3.50.

It is fortunate that one of the new books about August Strindberg published in his centennial year should have been written in English. It is fortunate, too, that the author is a person who not only writes English effectively but is also able to read Strindberg's works and the Swedish literature about him in Swedish. Elizabeth Sprigge is, of course, already known for her translations from Swedish literature, and the new biography of Strindberg is a proof that she knows Strindberg's works well, understands them and his life, and is able to present her knowledge and understanding in a way that is likely to appeal to Americans and Britishers.

What Miss Sprigge intended to do in her biography is made clear in her Foreword:

When one studies the letters and the biographies of contemporaries, one finds that Strindberg undoubtedly exaggerated some aspects of his life in his autobiographies, and it becomes clear that this was because certain common human woes, such as debt, hunger and hatred, grew into obsessions, and Strindberg used them as symbols of man's misery and emphasised them in the hope of forcing a cure. But there are also many dramatic passages in the autobiographical novels which read like invention and yet are borne out word for word in the letters.

As she goes on to say, her biography is presented as a story based primarily on his works. She has compared his confessional accounts with and checked them against available Strindberg

letters, Swedish biographies and other studies, and the testimony of Strindberg's relatives, friends, and other people who knew him. *The Strange Life of August Strindberg* is then not a critical study of his works.

What the American and British readers will find in Elizabeth Sprigge's book is a sane, balanced, and yet sympathetic account of Strindberg's life. They will find no straining for sensational effects, no twisting of facts to fit a predetermined notion, but, on the whole, a remarkably accurate and clear treatment of a controversial figure. She retells Strindberg's story so well that no mature reader is likely to find his interest in the subject flagging, nor is he likely to finish reading the book without an understanding and appreciation of Strindberg as a human being, such as no other biography yet written in English can give him.

For students and other readers who are beginning to study Strindberg and who do not have access to Strindberg's autobiographical prose fiction, *The Strange Life of August Strindberg* can supply the biographical information that is needed for an adequate understanding of his plays. For those of us who are introducing American students to Strindberg's plays each year, the book is particularly valuable in that here at last is a biography in English in which the facts of Strindberg's marital and other difficulties are treated in such an honest, straightforward fashion that the students need not come away from reading about Strindberg with a distorted impression of his personality or with a conviction that he was a destructive force. As Miss Sprigge says and shows, the keynote of Strindberg was "a passionate idealism which could not come to terms with ordinary life." Both the student and the general reader will find *The Strange Life of August Strindberg* very much worth reading.

WALTER JOHNSON

*University of Washington*

Ollén, Gunnar. *Strindbergs dramatik: En handbok*. Radiotjänst, Stockholm, 1949. Pp. 446. Price, 4.50 crowns (Paper bound).

In his handbook, Dr. Ollén of Radiotjänst intended to provide a convenient book of reference both for listeners who hear

Strindberg plays broadcast from Swedish stations and for general readers. For this purpose, Ollén has divided the plays into three groups: (1) contemporary dramas and "sagospel," (2) historical plays, and (3) "vandringsdramer." Within each division, Ollén presents a general introduction to all the plays in the group and then a treatment of the plays chronologically. For each play he gives a brief summary of the content, an account of its literary background, information about the circumstances under which it was written, its history on the stage both in Sweden and abroad, its reception by literary and, particularly, dramatic critics, and his own judgment of its merits. As Ollén states in his Preface, the handbook was designed for the general public; it was not intended to be a thorough and scholarly handbook.

If it had been presented as anything but a book for popular use, exception could be taken to such matters as Ollén's admittedly somewhat arbitrary classification of some of the plays, the incomplete accounts of the plays' literary and theatrical fortunes, the many unsupported generalizations about such matters as the influence of particular plays on other writers, and details here and there. If it is judged on its fulfilment of Ollén's clearly stated objectives, the handbook is a decidedly welcome volume for both the general reader and for the student who has begun to study Strindberg's plays seriously. They will get from the book reliable guidance from a man who obviously knows his Strindberg well and who knows also how to select what is pertinent and helpful and to present it in a readable fashion.

Among the many interesting things in the book are a brief but very good general introduction, a liberal number of excellent photographs of stage and radio productions of the plays, a sane treatment of Strindberg's reputation and significance abroad, and a helpful attention to Strindberg's theory and method of dramatic composition. Highly interesting to non-Swedish students of Strindberg are Ollén's accounts of the Swedish reception of Strindberg plays over the air and the filming of Strindberg plays and his influence on Swedish films. Much of the information about these and other matters are necessarily scattered

throughout the book, but a series of indexes will help the reader to find without difficulty the desired information.

Pages 354, 355, 358, 359, 362, 363, 366, 367 in the review copy are blank!

WALTER JOHNSON

*University of Washington*

Berendsohn, Walter A. *Martin Andersen Nexø: Hans Vej til Verdenslitteraturen*. Paa Dansk (fra Forfatterens Tyske Manuskript) ved Modens Knudsen. Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1948. Pp. 136. Price, 9.75 crowns (paper bound).

That devoted, and at times forlorn, little band of scholars who during the past thirty years advocated the methods of Comparative Literature as the best kind of literary study, will greet this book as another sign that their cause is at last on its way to victory, that the futility of studying any one author or single national literature separately is being recognized, and that the strictly isolationistic or departmentalized approach is bound to be superseded. With glad surprise we find ourselves in a new age, when even the mediocre intelligence of politicians has awakened to the truth that Western European civilization, on both sides of the Atlantic, has an historic interrelatedness which it must recognize and protect. Hence, as Goethe maintained long ago, the degree of importance which each national literature and individual author may have is to be measured by their significance in world-literature. On that principle, Walter Berendsohn gives us, not a study of Nexø by himself, or merely as a novelist important in Danish literature, but an account of how and why Nexø's work won its way, through translations and by means of appreciations by foreign critics, into recognition in other Scandinavian countries, in Germany, France, England, the United States, Russia, etc. Much of the book is occupied by bibliographical data which show the growth of Nexø's international vogue. Moreover, those portions in which Berendsohn tries to explain *why* Nexø flourished abroad bring him into comparison, not with Scandinavian authors only, but also with those of other nationalities. As will appear, I reject Berendsohn's explanation; but I am glad to acknowledge

that the comparative method which he pursues is a timely, and, in some respects, a praiseworthy one. The most brilliant chapter in the book is the last, in which he contrasts Nexø with Thomas Mann, and casts a good deal of light on both of the authors—though there again I cannot accept Berendsohn's main conclusions.

Berendsohn is a German, whom the Nazis exiled, and who, as he himself gratefully says, found a second home in Denmark. He has produced comparative-literature studies on Heine, Selma Lagerlöf, and Knut Hamsun. His enthusiasm for Nexø is great—perhaps even too great. He maintains that Nexø is “probably the only Danish author after H. C. Andersen of whom one can with certainty say that he has won a permanent position in world-literature” (p. 18). His reasons for thinking so are set forth with sincerity and clarity, and without truculence. His book is a neat and smooth little package; but in my opinion it conceals explosives. He tells us that Nexø's *Pelle* won world-wide acceptance because it shifted the center of literary interest from the individual to the proletariat. This, he says, was a complete break with the outworn past, an alliance with the inevitable and better future of mankind, and thus an assurance of immortality for Nexø's works. Other authors, to be sure, had dealt with the unhappy life of the wretched poor; but Hans Christian Andersen, though feeling the pathos of poverty had supinely accepted it in the fatalistic spirit of “The poor we have always with us”; and Gerhard Hauptmann, in *The Weavers*, had in the end betrayed the cause by his evasions and religiosity. As for Thomas Mann, he has consistently shown the typically bourgeois mentality by his preoccupation with the problems of individual characters and his unconcern for the sufferings of the masses. Why should great literature henceforth concern itself with the petty individual dilemmas of a bourgeois society, now that that society is on the way out?

The reader of Berendsohn's *Nexø*, though its tone is bland and diplomatic, will soon detect the “party-line.” Berendsohn is a Communist. He is of course glad that Nexø in his later years was converted to Communism and that he became, as chapters vii and viii show, one of the literary heroes of Soviet Russia. His

interpretation of Nexø's position in world-literature is admirably clear; but its clarity arises out of what the French call *simplesse*. (Unfortunately the Middle-English equivalent, "simpleness," has become obsolete; but it should be resurrected, for the mental state it designates has become commoner than ever.) In Soviet criticism, simpleness makes it easy to clarify all problems by ignoring any complicating elements that would prove embarrassing. Hence, when you ask for the truth, you are given half-truths. What Berendsohn in this case evades and ignores is the fact that during the years when Nexø wrote his greatest fiction he had not yet become a Communist. The author of *Pelle* was a socialist, deeply concerned over poverty, intimately and sympathetically familiar with the types of men and women produced by it. But as a socialist he was a "gradualist," placing his hopes for reform not in a totalitarian tyranny but in voluntary co-operative methods within a free democratic society. Whatever he may have come to believe subsequently, in the period of his best creative work he did not adhere to the vicious Soviet dogma that poverty can be abolished only by bloody revolution, and prevented from returning only by the complete suppression of all individual rights and liberties. Such political tendencies as *Pelle* expressed were those of a socialistic democrat; and what is more important (and what Berendsohn scarcely mentions) is that its literary greatness arose not out of its political tendencies but from his sincerely compassionate human feelings and his vividly realistic art.

There is also the simpleness of the Soviet mentality in Berendsohn's notion, on which all his comparisons are based, that there are only *two* kinds of novelists—those who are interested in individuals (a bourgeois preference), and those who are interested in the proletarian masses. The truth is that if one were to try to classify the great novelists in that respect, one would have to recognize not merely two such classes, but many; not a two-fold sharp distinction but something more like a spectrum. Long before the Soviet revolution, there were great novels which focused attention on other than merely individual existences—those which centered attention on families, or on trades and professions, or on social communities, or on provincial,

sectional, or national groups. In point of historical fact, Nexø's novels had their roots (this is not meant to deny their original qualities) in several of such earlier types of fiction. To assert, as Berendsohn does (p. 126), that Nexø "stands in no relation of dependence upon the European literary tradition" is indefensible. But if he had taken into consideration the real predecessors of Nexø (for instance, Zola, whom he wholly disregards), the politically fabricated theory on which his thesis rests would have collapsed. Hence, in my opinion, Dorothy Brewster's chapter "Proletarian Fiction," in Brewster and Burrell's *Modern Fiction* (1934), is to be preferred to Berendsohn's book, both as literary history and as literary criticism. In that chapter the value of Nexø's works, and their historical place, are seen in proper perspective in relation to Zola, Gorki, Plivier, Brunngraber, Malraux, Ehrenburg, etc.

Berendsohn's *Nexø* is useful as a bibliographical and factual account of translations and personal contacts. Incidentally it is an instructive example of the narrowness and simpleness of what passes for literary discussion in Communist circles, and what is actually nothing else than political propaganda. There are, to be sure, political tendencies in some of the masterpieces of world-literature; but what makes them masterpieces, so far as their substance is concerned, is not their *political* but their *moral* intelligence, their sensitive and wise perception of human character and relationships; and this is as true of Nexø's works as it is of all the others.

ERNEST BERNBAUM

*Freedom's Haven*

*Jaffrey, New Hampshire*

Egge, Peter. *Minner fra barndom og ungdom*. Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo, 1948. Pp. 330. Price, 15.50 crowns.

Kielland, Eugenia. *Nini Roll Anker i liv og arbeid*. H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), Oslo, 1948. Pp. 125. Illustrations.

No one would be likely to include any of the more than fifty works of Peter Egge or any of the many novels by Nini Roll Anker among the great books produced in Norway during the



past half-century. Their best efforts would suffer in comparison with, say, Duun and Hamsun. Neither the late Mrs. Anker nor Peter Egge achieved the mastery of language that the two other writers did; they never penetrated so far into the psychology of the individual as did Hamsun, and they did not treat in a universal manner man's struggle against the forces in the world as did Duun. They were simply the purveyors of current, progressive ideas as these affected the lives of ordinary men and women in a changing world. In a democracy, however, where everyone is charged with a degree of responsibility toward his fellowmen, writers like Nini Roll Anker and Peter Egge play important rôles. A part of their achievement is indicated in these two books.

Peter Egge, at an age when most men either have given up active life or are mouldering in their graves, yielded to the urging of friends and set down those events and forces in his childhood and youth which he now thinks contributed most to his intellectual and artistic development and to the formation of his views of life. In writing the first volume of his autobiography—the events take us down to about 1895—he relies pretty much upon what he remembers, and only occasionally does he turn to material that he has at hand. He is not disposed, at his age, to look up source material, for what he remembers must be more important than what he has forgotten. An octogenarian should, of course, be allowed that prerogative, and the result is a delightfully written commentary on a struggling young author with ambition and some talent, done by a wise, kindly, alert man sixty years later.

Peter Egge, the autobiographer, remembers but no longer acutely feels the despair, the hardships, and the discouragement of the boy and youth, for during the last half-century he has attained success as a writer and he has witnessed vast improvements in the standard of living and in the attitude toward life on the part of his people, credit for some of which he can rightfully claim. The poverty, the class distinctions, and the concomitant lack of consideration for others, felt particularly keenly when it was perpetrated by the schoolmasters—they usually kowtowed to the well-to-do—are now largely, though not en-



tirely, a thing of the past in his country. Interestingly enough, however, these are the matters that Peter Egge, the old man, thinks of when he looks back upon the sensitive boy and youth who struggled to get an education in order that he might improve his lot and help others improve theirs. In recording these impressions he makes everyone aware of the grave injustice done to future men and women at the time of life when they are defenseless. Peter Egge is not the only Norwegian author of late who has recorded this view (cf. Gabriel Scott, *De vergeløse*, and Finn Halvorsen, *Abrahams offer*), and although that is not all which he discusses in the first volume of his autobiography, it is germane to his whole thesis as to where the basic wrongs are inflicted upon man.

Peter Egge presents his impressions of a large number of people with whom he came into contact and he shows how these influenced his thinking and his writing. The gifted but unstable Dybfest gets more attention than does any other figure. Egge's treatment of Hamsun, however, most clearly reveals the former's humanity. No other person did so much for the struggling young Egge as did Hamsun. He read Egge's early novels and wrote copious comments on style and character development, which were of inestimable benefit to Egge. Although Egge has for many years opposed Hamsun's social views (cf. e.g., *De unge harrrell*), he is not vengeful toward Hamsun even in spite of the latter's position during the occupation. But Egge can be sharp and cutting when he thinks he ought to be, as in his remarks about Nansen, whom he thought arrogant.

Nearly everywhere throughout the book the reader discovers how much Egge has mellowed, but above all he discovers that there is something fundamentally good in man, that improvement through man's own urging and direction is possible, and that in spite of all the contemporary prophets of doom, humanity is struggling slowly forward toward greater understanding of the individual and of the world in which he lives.

Eugenia Kielland writes of her late friend, Nini Roll Anker, in a warm and sympathetic manner. Her study is based on personal acquaintance and on the journals which were willed to her by Nini Roll Anker. The Roll family passed on to their children

a heritage that became the basis of Nini's philosophy of life. Her paternal grandfather was a chief justice in Trondheim. Her father, a district judge and several times Storting representative from Molde, was a friend of Eilert Sundt. With the latter he helped found workers' societies and was thus instrumental in spreading enlightenment among the lower classes with the express purpose of enabling them to rise out of their unworthy station. Her father remained throughout his life a champion of justice, and his unfaltering personal integrity is still a byword. Personal integrity, consideration for others, and a social conscience Nini absorbed in daily contact with her family.

Nini Roll married Peter Anker, a member of the numerous Anker family of Fredrikshald, the various branches of which carried on business and farming on a large scale. They were conservative politically, they entertained incessantly and lavishly, and they looked upon their women as decorations and household managers. By 1900 there was still many a Selma Bratsberg or Nora or Mrs. Tjælde or Mrs. Jæger, in spite of all that Ibsen and Bjørnson and Lie had tried to do. Nini Anker, impelled by the disparity between her former view of life and that which she was supposed to adopt, revolted against this milieu, divorced her husband and married his cousin, Johan. The latter, a republican, understood Nini's views and encouraged her in them.

Eugenia Kielland shows how a part of Nini Roll Anker's novels results from the application of the Roll philosophy of life to the Anker tradition. This is in a sense negative, but her positive contribution came with those works which urged improved conditions for women, workers, children, and oppressed peoples. In addition to her analysis of Nini Roll Anker's philosophy of life as it finds expression in her literary works, Eugenia Kielland discusses Nini's relation to most of the artists, critics, and writers of her day, e.g., Vigeland, Gunnar Heiberg, and the young Sigrid Undset. This part of the biography is not its least interesting feature.

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## BOOK RECEIVED

*The Andersen-Scudder Letters*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1949.—Anderson, George K. *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1949.—Berendsohn, Walter A. *Strindbergs sista levnadsår*. Saxon & Lindströms Förlag, Stockholm, 1948.—Borup, Morten. *Breve og Aktsykker vedrørende Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, Fjerde Bind 1853-1860, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Brix, Hans. *Guldhornene fra Gallehus*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Ek, Sverker. *Möten med Runeberg, Rydberg och Fröding*, C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag, Lund, 1949.—Fergusson, Francis. *The Idea of a Theater*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1949.—Grundtvig-Studier 1949, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Hatt, Gudmund. *Asiatic Influences in American Folklore*, Det kgl. danske videnskabernes Selskab, Copenhagen, 1949.—Ingerslev, Fredrik. *Selma Lagerlöf*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Kabell, Aage. *Don Pedro*, Det kgl. danske videnskabernes Selskab, Copenhagen, 1949.—Langballe, Carl. *B. S. Ingemann: En Digterbillede i ny Belysning*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Loveland, Lilly Ann Steel. *Johan Stål: John Steel*, Marshall Jones Co., Frankestown, New Hampshire, 1947.—Møller, Kai Friis. *Baudelaire paa Barrikaden og andre Causerier*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Norrild, Svend. *Dansk litteratur fra Saxo til Kaj Munk*. Two volumes. Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—Rubow, Paul V. *Two Essays: Henrik Ibsen. The Sagas*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—*The Sagas of Kormak and the Sworn Brothers*. Translated by Lee M. Hollander. Princeton University Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation, New York, 1949.—Schyberg, Fredrik. *Teatret i Krig*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1949.—*Tegnérstudier*. C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag, Lund, 1948.—Werin, Algot. *Svenskt 1800-tal: Litterära essayer*, C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag, Lund, 1948.



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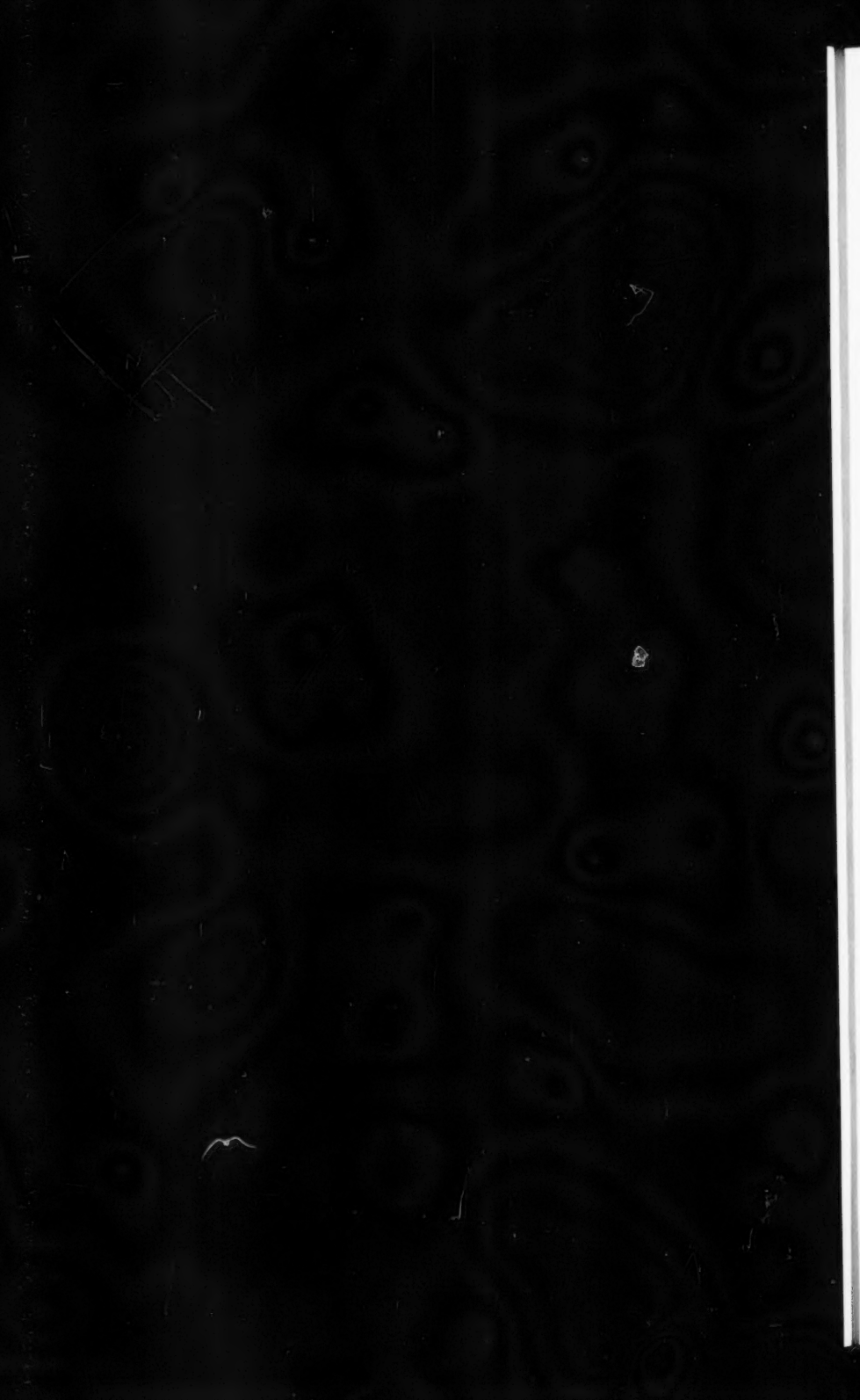
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